

well have proposed restrictions on skiing, or eating apple strudel.

The country's 8000 tobaccoists led the revolt, distributing leaflets bearing a far from flattering picture of the minister, and proclaiming, "This woman will take away your rights. Today she will forbid where (or what) you can smoke," followed by similar, absurd claims that tomorrow she would introduce equally outrageous restrictions on what people drink, and the day after, on what they eat.

It is unclear what will happen, in the absence of any other leadership or encouragement for the lone minister. Will she be moved on, as Dr Ausserwinkler was? If so, it is hard to see what different line her successor could take, given that doing nothing will no longer be an option as EU and other international requirements begin to bite. It is not as if there is no base at all to build on: a recent Gallup poll showed that despite years of neglect, Austrians are not so very different to other Europeans: seven out of 10 smokers want to quit, a majority of all citizens would like to see smoking banned in all restaurants, and more than two thirds feel "harassed" by other people's smoke. Perhaps most remarkably, in this tolerant land of unrestricted smoking, more than a quarter of smokers themselves said they found the smoke of their fellow smokers unbearable.

With an aspiring multi-national company in charge of the old state monopoly, and the other big players free to exploit the market, it is unlikely that any effective, comprehensive tobacco control legislation can be achieved without a long, hard, and somewhat un-Austrian fight, even if it is several decades overdue.

Kenya: beach party "helps" tobacco bill

As we know, one of the most serious dangers of the implementation process of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is that tobacco companies will make cash strapped developing country governments offers they cannot refuse, to "help" draft the necessary laws. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine the bitter disappointment of Kenyan health advocates last November. In the same week that their country had proudly announced it was ratifying the FCTC, they learned of a junket thrown in connection with the country's tobacco bill for more than 40 members of parliament (MPs), at an exclusive resort on the coast. Some of the MPs were of ministerial rank, and one was a

doctor in whose constituency tobacco is the main crop, an area where health experts say there are significant, related health problems.

The seaside jaunt was hardly a secret: the country's leading newspaper, *The Daily Nation*, carried the story as its front page lead under the provocative and revealing headline, "MPs have fun at Tobacco Bill talks", complete with a photograph—of questionable aesthetic appeal—of some of the MPs entering the water at the luxurious hotel where the "workshop" took place. Overleaf, readers were treated to another paddling picture and some suggestions from an MP about essential amendments that would need to be made to the bill, predictably the industry friendly sort that we all know so well. There was also a defensive statement from the public relations firm reported to have organised the event, denying that tobacco manufacturers were behind it, though failing to confirm who was.

The despondent health workers can take comfort, however, that they clearly have friends in the right places. The newspaper did no favours to the MPs, reporting that they had received handsome cash allowances on top of their

travel and subsistence costs; and its reporter elicited the important information that the health ministry, commendably, had boycotted the event. But if this is how it is to be in poor countries that try to do the right thing by the FCTC, we may see sinister events like this repeated all over the world, as the industry tries to ensure that life under the treaty can mean business as usual.

China: tobacco museum's "smoky" health information

The very fact that there is a prestigious new China Tobacco Museum shows how tobacco's status in China is still far from compatible with the country's urgent need for serious, effective tobacco control. It was inaugurated in Shanghai City last July, to subdued local excitement. Funded entirely by the Chinese tobacco industry, under the leadership of the State Tobacco Monopoly Bureau, to the tune of 180 million Renminbi (US\$21.7 million), this is the world's largest tobacco museum. The museum spans over 3000 square metres and houses over 150 000



USA: Philip Morris (PM) has quietly phased out the "LOWERED TAR & NICOTINE" on packs of Marlboro Lights, apparently starting in 2003. Over several decades, tobacco manufacturers have been strident in their defence of being allowed to print whatever they want on cigarette advertisements and packs, citing the vital necessity of informing customers of important consumer information. Strangely, PM does not appear to have informed its customers about why it dropped the claim from its packs—perhaps one factor was the guilty verdict in a consumer fraud case where a judge concluded in 2003 that PM misled smokers by suggesting light cigarettes were safer than regular varieties. At the appeal hearing last November, PM's lawyer, former Illinois Governor James Thompson, was asked to comment on why the label was removed—after all, if there was no fraud, why remove the statement? He was unable to provide an answer. Although PM has removed the words, the cigarettes still seem to contain filter vents—which were central to the charge of deception.